

LMII Journal



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Making Decisions: Leaning on Intuition

The majority of leaders thrive on left-brain thinking. That portion of the brain, of course, excels in number skills and logic. The right brain, on the other hand, contributes largely to insight and imagination, which surprisingly few leaders consider to be valuable decision-making skills.

Left-brain thinkers can “balance” their minds by learning to access their imagination and become more sensitive to the issues surrounding them. But can this “balancing act” have a positive affect on decision-making?

Yes. Intuition is simply the innate ability to make good decisions with less-than-complete data. Spinoza, the 17th-century philosopher, called intuition a “superior way of knowing ultimate truth without the use of prior knowledge or reason.” Leaders, perhaps by necessity, tend to overemphasize facts, reason, and logic.

Unfortunately, logic and analysis can only go so far. In many cases, the use of personal intuition is the only way to increase available options. Beyond the boundaries of so-called analytical thought, intuition can dramatically increase your personal effectiveness. But how?

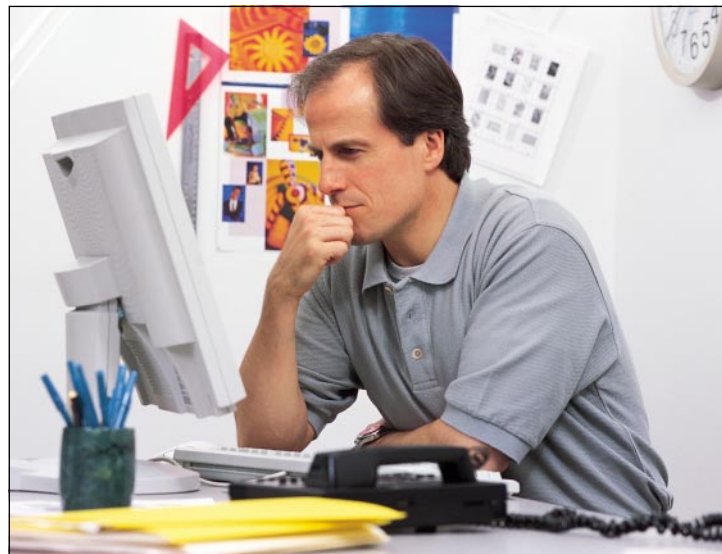
Part of the answer comes from an understanding of the intuitive process. In a typical business scenario, intuition is

actually created or sparked by a combination of three events. First, a question, problem, or crisis arises, or a decision is required. The second element is the increased awareness of a clearly defined goal. The third element is a sensitivity to situations and circumstances that affect the decision you face.

By comparing your problem or situation with your intention or objective, you heighten personal receptivity to new thoughts and solutions. This process helps determine whether one direction will better suit the achievement of your goals, or whether another path will lead to a different and more desirable outcome.

Adding awareness of a clearly defined goal brings a whole new level of reasoning. Increased awareness facilitates the recognition of factors that might contribute to a given situation or a specific solution. Awareness acts on both problem and objective, serving to more clearly define both

elements. The end result of this mental “melding” process is innate, intuitive wisdom – the required and often missing element in the process of decision-making.



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Using Intuition

Mere understanding and acceptance of the mental process of intuition doesn't make it easier to follow innate wisdom or instinct. This difficulty – the constant battle between the need for reason and logic and the desire to follow one's instincts – led scientist Albert Einstein to hang a sign in his Princeton office. The sign read, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts."

Whether you prefer to call it a "gut feeling," "a hunch," or "business instinct," you probably use intuition in decision-making on a fairly regular basis. Ray Kroc, who initially balked at the 2.7 million-dollar price tag for the McDonald's franchise, said his "funny bone instinct" urged him to go ahead and close the deal. The question begs itself: Can your intuition make you another Ray Kroc? Perhaps! By creating a greater awareness of your own intuitive nature, you can learn to trust your instincts, even when you have evidence to the contrary.

Start with some quiet time alone. A quiet mind gives way to patience and relaxation. None of us likes to make



decisions under pressure; this practice tends to thwart your intuition and forces you to rely solely on incomplete, mismanaged, or misunderstood data. Seek intuitive "impressions" that you can examine, study, and ponder. As you increase your awareness of clearly defined goals, the central problem comes into sharper focus. This process is the genesis of your intuitive "edge," and the more you seek and trust it, the harder and more successfully it will work for you.

Most leaders and managers have a hard time with this first step. After all, experience has taught the value of

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making careful decisions based on sound data. As Bill Gates points out, at some point the data finally runs out. What do we do then?

Deciding to Decide

Many individuals in positions of leadership react to a lack of data by deciding not to decide. A target date is the best and easiest cure for this sort of procrastination. When the deadline rolls around, you've committed to making a decision. Meanwhile, your intuitive "edge" may have provided the best answer.

The real issue, however, is developing a greater level of self-reliance. Psychologist Herb Goldberg blames past conditioning for the general lack of executive self-reliance. "The struggle to learn to listen and respect intuitive, inner prompt-ings," Goldberg says, "is the greatest challenge of all. Conditioning has been so powerful that it has all but destroyed our ability to be self-aware."

Intuition Specialist Laura Day maintains that, in business, individuals are most successful when they simply try to be themselves. "If you tune into the integrity of your own vision, your own desire, and your own creativity," Day says, "you can achieve whatever you want."

The process of "tuning in" is as individual as each of us. For example, Thomas Edison was famous for retiring to take a nap when faced with a particularly vexing problem. The inventor would often jerk awake with a solution to his difficulty. His assistants wondered aloud how Edison ever got anything done. To them it seemed as though he slept all the time!

Edison's example proves a vital point: Every great inventor, innovator, thinker, businessperson, or leader has been considered a fool at one time or another. What transformed these individuals into the people we strive to emulate was their ability to move ahead by trusting their intuition, insight, and faith in themselves.

Writing Out Your Goals

Almost every leadership authority talks about the power of written business and personal goals. But why? Aside from the fact that written goals help identify potentially meaningful achievements, why are written goals so helpful?

Part of the answer lies in the physical act of writing. Writing crystallizes thought, which motivates action. And, a written goals program is also a basis for measuring progress. Definite plans, after all, produce definite results. Indefinite plans, in contrast, typically produce little or no results!

Other benefits from written goals include:

- Written goals save time.
- Each time you review a written goal, you become more motivated.
- Written plans and goals help identify conflicts between various priorities.
- Written goals form a basis for a step-by-step approach to the achievement of goals.
- Written goals stimulate visualization.

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The Meaning of Success

Ask five people to define success, and you'll likely get five different answers. Strange, isn't it? The one thing most of us seek cannot be defined by a clear, generally-accepted standard...until now.

Paul J. Meyer was the man who took the confusion out of success and developed the first systematic approach to personal and organizational achievement. Meyer, who founded Leadership Management,[®] Inc. in 1966, defined success as the "progressive realization of worthwhile, predetermined personal goals."

Success at any level doesn't come by accident. You cannot buy success, marry into it, inherit it, or stumble upon it. Success, according to Meyer, depends on the process of progressive realization. Goal setting is the most powerful force available to improve personal productivity. And personal productivity, in turn, actually triggers success.

Meyer believed that productivity and success are a direct result of a conscious and deliberate goal setting practice, coupled with appropriate planning and action. "Without planning and goal setting," Meyer pointed out, "all the desire that can be aroused in the limitless potential of the human spirit is wasted like the random lightning of a summer storm."

The message is simple enough: Human desire and individual potential go unharnessed and unused; their potential power is wasted without the direction provided by goal setting and careful planning.

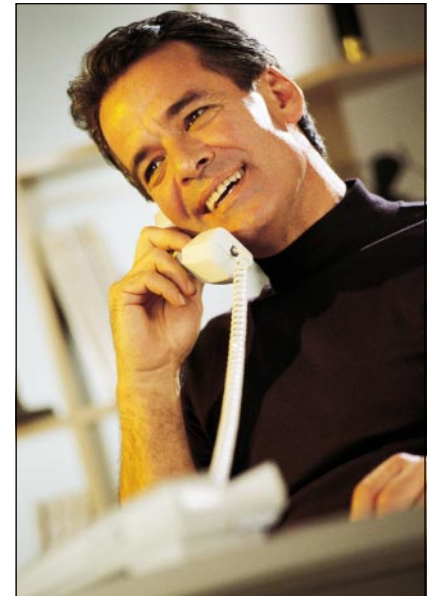
Meyer believed goal setting – supported by careful planning – provides a sense of direction to keep individuals focused on their most important activities – tasks Meyer calls "high payoff activities." "Goals serve as a filter to eliminate extraneous demands," Meyer said, adding, "Goals bring order to life, and meaning and purpose which sustain motivation over a long period of time."

If success can be defined by goals, and goals achieved through a process of personal management and goal setting, why are not more people uniformly successful?

Paul Meyer said many individuals avoid the goal setting process because they don't understand it. "The steps in the process are simple but not simplistic," he maintained, "and the process is comprehensive but not complex. Many people lack the patience and open-mindedness required to watch an overall activity pattern unfold."

Although many worthwhile achievements come about as side effects of some other activity or purpose, they are, nevertheless, a direct consequence of the pursuit of predetermined goals. The full, ultimate effect of goal achievement is not always clearly visible when the achievement plan is set in motion, but achievement and increased personal productivity invariably rise as a direct consequence of striving toward predetermined goals.

"Individual pace can vary," Meyer believed, "but the sequential process of goal setting and personal achievement does not. When you internalize the goal setting process, your goals create a magnetic attraction that draws you toward their achievement."



Good Leaders Plan for the Unexpected

The failure to plan for the unexpected is one of the biggest mistakes people and companies make when working on their strategic and tactical plans. It's evident in many areas, including their short- and long-term planning and in both their personal and business plans. **Here are a few examples:**

- ◆ Budgeting for expenses. It's amazing how many people don't budget for the unexpected expenses that occur almost every month. Because of this, they often experience a shortfall at the end of the month. It's not unusual to see this lack of planning result in a 10 percent or more shortfall during any given month. This in turn has a compounding effect. When you overspend the budget in one month, you start the next month in the hole!
- ◆ Planning to be somewhere on time. The number-one reason why most people don't arrive on time is that they don't plan for the unexpected, such as traffic delays, weather, or last-minute phone calls. They end up 15 to 30 minutes late – often with a room full of people waiting or an important sales call being missed.
- ◆ A business downturn or problem. Most people don't want to anticipate future problems. They consider it to be negative. Well, negatives occur every year in business, and if you don't plan for them to happen, you may be caught short.



Here's a specific example of how the unexpected can be planned for and even eliminated: A business owner had a difficult time meeting his annual goals for revenues and profit because something happened every year that caused a down month. In this situation, the unexpected became the expected, but there was no strategy to overcome the problem until he devised a special plan.

Every month, the owner planned to accomplish 110 percent of the goals for the year. Before the year was out, the entire company had reached 100 percent of its goals for the year. Even with unexpected downturns, the company achieved and actually exceeded both its revenue and profit goals because the business owner planned for the unexpected.

Develop Discipline

Do you set goals with earnest enthusiasm, but find yourself unable to accomplish them? Do you make big plans, but never seem to follow through with them? Then, you may be in need of a good dose of discipline. Not in the sense of punishment, but discipline that will train you to develop the consistency and persistence you need to reach your goals.

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines discipline as "training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement." It's the deliberate practice of doing what you aim for long enough until your intentions become a reality. Simply put, discipline is a matter of forming and maintaining a habit.

Many people consider discipline an admirable, but virtually unattainable quality reserved for Olympic athletes and highly driven businesspeople. But the truth is that anyone can develop discipline with a little effort. **To develop the discipline to reach your goals:**

- ◆ Establish worthwhile goals. Make them specific and measurable. For example, you may want to read 30 books that will improve your mental faculties, increase your income by a certain amount this year, or attend a seminar on time management or financial planning.
- ◆ Make a plan. Outline the specific steps you'll take to meet your goal. Your written plan will help you track your progress until the new habit is established.
- ◆ Desire change. You must desire to change your present behavior in order to improve mentally and morally. Change begins with a conscious choice of the will.
- ◆ Commit and believe. You will need to have persistence to carry out your plan daily. This requires commitment. Visualize the benefits you'll obtain by making these changes. Move from hope to belief in yourself to change "nice" habits into "great" habits.
- ◆ Use repetition. Repeat the new behavior until it becomes an established habit. If you slip up once, don't let it discourage you. Just pick up where you left off. Continue practicing the desired behavior.

Do You Possess the Discipline to Lead?

Do you have it? Do you have that single-minded focus that's driven by something seen in your mind, felt in your heart, but not visible to the eye?

Do you have the fortitude to stay the course in the midst of adversity? Do you have the stamina required to lead your organization through all types of situations with long-term survival and success as overarching goals? In short, do you have the discipline to lead?

John F. Kennedy wrote, "The life of the artist is, in relation to his work, stern and lonely. He has labored hard, often amid deprivation, to perfect his skill. He has turned aside from quick success in order to strip his vision of everything secondary or cheapening. His working life is marked by intensive application and intense discipline."

Substitute "leader" for "artist," and you get an idea of the resolve required for a disciplined leader. Like the artist who sees a masterpiece when others see a blank canvas, the disciplined leader sees the structure in unstructured decision-making situations when others see only unrelated problems.

Unfortunately, the definition of disciplined leadership is not always clear to others. While this situation is not an entirely new phenomenon, it does seem more apparent and critical in today's business environment. Today, we refer to the "New World Economy" and the "Information Age" as if business were Hollywood fabrication. We see the dot-com millionaires as high-profile geniuses. But in reality, in this current business environment of dot-com failures, increased global competitive pressures and pay-at-your-laptop M.B.A. graduates, it is harder than ever to "see" truly great business leaders. The picture of the disciplined leader is dimming; the concept of disciplined leadership is fading away.

The picture has faded because of the worldview of business leadership. The world sees business leaders such as Lee Iacocca and Bill Gates as if they were Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods. These businessmen are high profile – and highly accomplished. We see them on television. We read about them in our local newspapers. They always seem to be in the public eye. That is the world's picture of

today's business leader: charismatic and combative, aggressive and arrogant, and powerful and omnipotent.

But the world's picture of today's business leader is not the picture of the truly disciplined leader. That picture is one of courage and consideration, intellect and integrity, and determination and dependability. This style of leadership captures the essence of discipline. You can see it. You can feel it. You know what it is. You know what it is not.

Discipline is a structured system of rules governing conduct or activity, not fame. Leadership is the directing of activities, not the manipulation of the press. Disciplined leadership is about long-term, enduring success, not quick profit. A disciplined leader uses a structured system of rules to govern the directing of activities. The disciplined leader is not a performer.

Disciplined leadership requires the kind of resolve that results in years, even decades, of continuous success. In the *Harvard Business Review*, consultant and author Jim Collins calls this disciplined leadership "Level Five Leadership." Philosopher Peter Koestenbaum, writing in *Fast Company*, calls it "transformational leadership." But they both are talking about the same thing: Long-term, sustainable leadership through personal humility, authenticity, professional competence and will combined with personal and professional integrity.

This long-term, sustainable leadership requires a structured system of rules to govern its behavior. This type of leadership possesses the character described by Collins and Koestenbaum. This type of leadership requires the discipline of the artist as described by President Kennedy. This is the type

of leadership of a disciplined leader.

Do you possess such a structured system of rules that governs your leadership behavior? Do you have the unquestionable character described by Collins and Koestenbaum? Do you have the intense discipline described by President Kennedy?

And do you really have the discipline to lead?

Guest Author James King, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Business at the University of Mary Hardin Baylor.



Discover Your Destiny with Personal Vision

Finding your destiny starts with a vision. The vision you have for your life in turn gives the direction you need to seek and find your destiny. This vision acts as a lighthouse – a guiding beacon – to light your way to success in both your career and personal life.

Defining a vision for your life means defining who you are and what you desire to do with your life. What activities give you the most pleasure? What special talents and abilities do you possess? How would you like to contribute those talents and abilities to create something meaningful? What could you give yourself to that would bring lasting satisfaction? Who do you want to become? The answers to these questions will help you define your vision.

It's essential that this vision include who you are in both your career and personal life. Many people have trouble because they've focused on one area to the exclusion of the other. If you neglect to include both areas, you'll forfeit the fullness of life for which you were intended. Unfortunately, this is the case in roughly 70 percent of the executives I've met. They blame their families, bosses, or themselves for their frustrations, when, in fact, they've tried to find fulfillment in only one area of their lives.

But it takes more than a vision to reach your destiny. You must move from the "where to" to the "how to." This is where goals and plans of action come in. Once you have a vision for your life, it gives you direction to set meaningful goals. These goals should reflect the two-part nature of your vision, including both your career and personal life. Within the personal section, set goals that cover the six areas of life: physical, spiritual, mental, financial, family and social.



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Make sure you include goals for each area so that your goals will be balanced. Your career goals must be balanced with your personal goals. Within your personal goals, each of the six areas of life should be balanced with each other. Never go to the extreme in one area and disregard another. If you do, you'll become "lopsided" in your development and will miss out on complete fulfillment.

Not only must your goals be balanced, but they should also be compatible. Your career goals must match your personal goals if they're going to work. If they're at odds, you'll be miserable. Take, for example, a man who considers spending time with his family a top priority. If he chooses a career as a traveling salesman, his goals aren't compatible, and he will feel frustrated and guilty. Both the personal and career areas of his life will suffer.

Once you've established a vision and set balanced, compatible goals from this vision, you can then use wise planning to work toward these goals that lead to your destiny. Always be aware,

however, that along the pathway there will be pitfalls to avoid, hills to climb, valleys to rest in and possible detours. But if you keep your vision and goals firmly in mind, you will pursue and find

your destiny.

Set good, healthy goals, and throughout your life's journey you should find joy, peace, love, strength of character and many things that will make your life worthwhile.

Gain Control with the Power of Silence

In this age of noise, more noise and still more noise, perhaps the most confusing and misunderstood “sound” is the sound of silence. Amid the constant barrage of telephone calls, presentations, negotiations and daily chitchat, every once in a while there’s a break in the frenzy.

The way you respond to these moments of silence can mean the difference between increased profits or decreased clientele, deep understanding or total chaos, or a job well done or a job to be redone.

To the effective communicator, silence is an opportunity to gain keener insight into your conversations and clearer understanding about the people with whom you’re conversing. After all, there’s a reason no one is talking, and if you find it, you’ll know how to respond.

Silence doesn’t mean communication is dead; it may have simply lost its direction. You can regain control of things by asking leading questions – those that penetrate the confusion and guide the conversation to a desired end. Here’s how:

- ◆ Lead others to be more specific. One of the most common reasons for silence is a lack of clarity in the words and phrases used. Generalities, clichés and unclear terms can disrupt the flow and content of your conversation. Mark Twain said it well, “The difference between the right word and the nearly right word is the same as that between lightning and the lightning bug.” Leading questions can help you nail down details and define terms. “Does ‘as soon as possible’ mean you’ll finish the report by the end of the week, by the end of the day, or by noon?” “You said our representative was discourteous. Did he yell? Act disinterested? Ignore your comments?” All individuals have their own peculiar communication styles and mannerisms. Learn to recognize yours and those of the people you know.
- ◆ Lead others to the main point. Conversations can digress into detours, and detours can take you far off the beaten path. Leading questions can help steer you back on track. “But your primary concern is that everyone gets their input to you before next week’s meeting?” “Of all the proposals you’ve mentioned, which one do you think is the most feasible within our estimated budget?” Know where you’re going in a conversation, and you’ll know



when you get there. Keep a careful ear out for those things that distract rather than direct.

- ◆ Lead others to clarify conflicting facts or statements. Like rush-hour traffic, conversations can result in traffic jams and sometimes accidents. While you and your partner may be traveling down the same communication highway, you may be in different lanes or heading in different directions. Leading questions can direct you through the congestion. “Your colleague said you’d arrive at noon. I understood you to say 2 p.m. When will you be there?” “We seem to be leaning toward the Turney proposal. I thought we already ruled them out.

Did we get new data that makes them a more attractive option?” Effective lawyers, detectives and scientists poke and probe until they understand the facts completely. So should you.

- ◆ Lead others to further feedback. The purpose of conversation is to exchange ideas and information in a give-and-take manner. Just as a tennis match is monotonous if only one contestant takes part, so it is with conversations. Some people don’t give any feedback; others give it, only insufficiently. Be alert, and use leading questions to elicit the answers you’re seeking. “What other comments do you have regarding our staffing shortage?” “In your opinion, which of the four issues should we concentrate on first?” Get feedback first, and avoid misunderstandings later.
- ◆ Lead others to agreement. At times, nothing more is said because nothing more needs to be said. It’s time to act – and ask. “You probably want to hire another part-timer then, right?” “I’m assuming you can give me a 20-percent discount if I give you an answer today?” “Since you’re so displeased with the current facility, do you want to consider another location?” There’s a tendency to be gruff or pushy here. Avoid this. You simply want clear, specific and timely action.

Silence is simply another form of communication, but it can speak louder than the most adamant protests. What’s the next silence you can turn into action?

By Dianna Booher, author, speaker, and CEO of Booher Consultants, a Dallas-based communications training firm. Her programs include communication and life balance/productivity. She has published more than 40 books, including Communicate with Confidence®, Speak with Confidence®, and Your Signature Work®. Call (817) 868-1200 or visit www.booher.com.

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